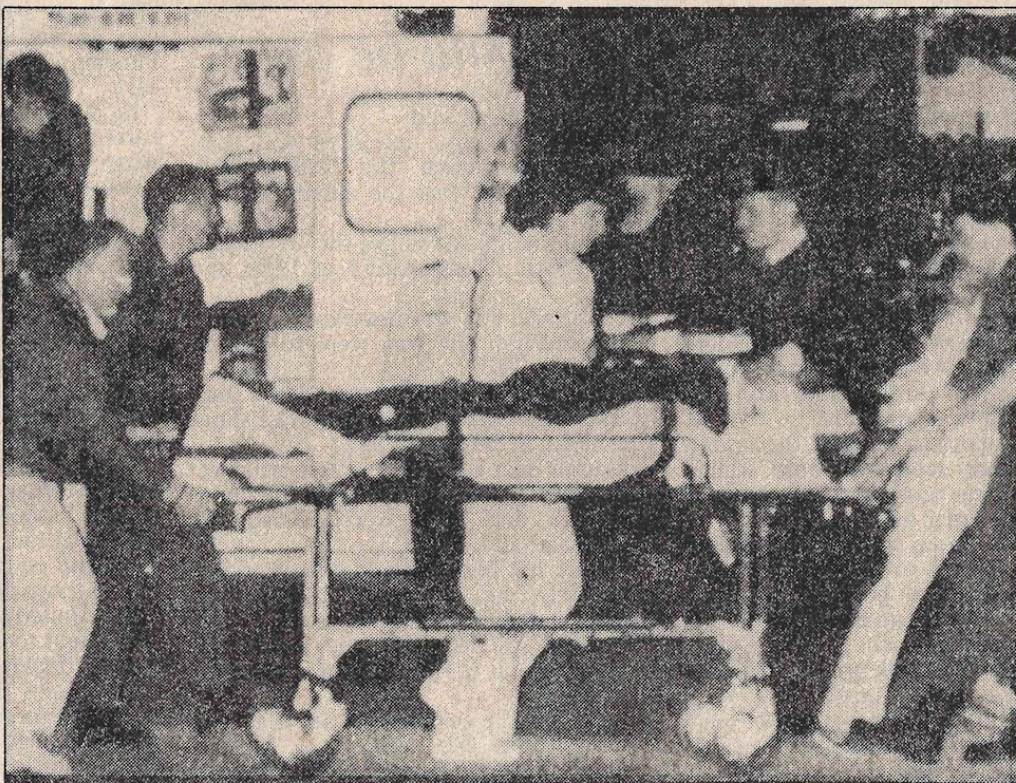




— Associated Press

An unidentified sailor from the USS Stark is rushed to the Wiesbaden Air Force hospital in West Germany. Two

sailors — who were being treated for burns over 20 percent of their bodies — were the most seriously injured.

Burned sailors improving, may return to U.S. on Friday

From news services

WIESBADEN, West Germany — Two sailors wounded in the Iraqi missile strike on the USS Stark were in good condition yesterday with burns and shrapnel wounds.

A doctor said they remembered little of the attack.

Meanwhile, a U.S. military transport plane carrying the remains of the 37 crewmen killed on the Stark is expected in West Germany today.

A C141 transport plane arrived in Bahrain yesterday after a flight from the Rhein-Main Air Base near Frankfurt and was scheduled to pick up the remains, the Air Force said.

Sailors James Wheeler, 28, of El Paso, Texas, and Lawrence Mark Bareford, 23, of Spotsylvania, Va., were being treated at the Wiesbaden Air Force hospital, located 24 miles west of Frankfurt.

"Both have extensive burns to the lower parts of their bodies and wounds from shrapnel," said Col. Robert Gilmore, director of the medical center.

Wheeler has second-degree burns over 35 percent of his body; Bareford has second-degree burns over 20 percent of his body. "Right now their lives are not threatened,"

Gilmore said.

"Both are alert and conscious, and I have talked to them. They said the worst part of their experience was the explosion."

The two sailors told doctors they received no warning before the assault. "The only thing they remember is the explosion. That was the only warning they had," Gilmore said.

Apparently the two men were in their quarters along with two-thirds of the crew when two missiles hit the frigate.

An Air Force spokesman said 15 of the injured crewmen had their injuries treated aboard the crippled frigate. Others were taken to a Bahrain hospital.

He said Wheeler and Bareford — flown to West Germany on a C-141 transport plane converted into a flying hospital — were the most seriously injured.

Air Force Sgt. Ralph Monson, a spokesman for the U.S. European Command in Stuttgart, said in a telephone interview yesterday the two sailors would return to the United States on a medical evacuation flight Friday.

Monson said they would be taken to the U.S. Army Burn Center, Brook Hospital, in San Antonio, Texas.